

## **OUTSOURCED SERVICES SCRUTINY PANEL**

**4 July 2017**

Present: Councillor T Williams (Chair)  
Councillor S Cavinder (Vice-Chair)  
Councillors J Dhindsa, K Hastrick, M Hofman, R Laird and  
B Mauthoor

Also present: Councillor Rabi Martins (minute numbers 1 to 4)

Officers: Committee and Scrutiny Support Officer (JK)  
Head of Corporate Strategy and Communications  
Committee and Scrutiny Support Officer (JK)

### **1 Apologies for Absence/ Committee membership**

There was a change of membership for this meeting; Councillor Laird replaced Councillor Kent.

### **2 Disclosures of interest**

There were no disclosures of interest.

### **3 Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 22 February 2017 were submitted and signed.

### **4 Performance indicators overview**

The Panel received a report of the Head of Corporate Strategy and Communications. The report outlined the council's approach to the setting, reporting and monitoring of performance information within the context of its overall performance management framework and in particular its key performance indicators (KPIs).

The Head of Corporate Strategy and Communications made a presentation to the Panel covering how the council's performance management framework had

evolved, performance indicators, targets and how performances were challenged.

The set of indicators which were now reported had been tailored to Watford and although a wide range of indicators were collected, only key indicators were reported to scrutiny. It was crucial to see the indicators in context considering the geography and demographics of the town, amongst other things.

The panel discussed how the particular suite of indicators was chosen to be measured and reported and how the targets were set. This was carried out by the heads of service as part of the service planning process and was also agreed by the portfolio holders. Scrutiny had the role of challenging these decisions to ensure the most appropriate data was being reported and the targets were robust and would promote better outcomes for residents.

Considering how the indicators could be benchmarked, it was noted that this was particularly difficult now that indicators were no longer reported nationally. Councils chose their sets of indicators, which could be measured differently, and each council area was unique.

Data quality standards were then discussed by the panel. The Head of Corporate Strategy and Communications undertook spot checks of the data reported. For the outsourced services, it was the role of the client teams to ensure the figures were accurate and do spot checks. How this operated in relation to street cleansing was outlined particularly in relation to how the street cleansing outcomes were audited.

Turning to the indicators which discussed residents' satisfaction, members discussed the citizen's panel and the community survey. The Head of Corporate Strategy and Communications explained how the citizen's panel was put together by an external company. It was designed to be representative of wards and the population. There were set tracking questions in each community survey but it also included questions based on what was relevant at the time. A survey was planned for the autumn and the panel expressed an interest in having an input.

Comparing the current performance management processes to the previous performance regime, the Head of Corporate Strategy and Communications commented that services were now able to make their own decisions about how best to measure performance but balance and discipline were still required. There was a significant amount of what was known as 'transparency data' which was required to be published by government, e.g. expenditure over £500 had to be published monthly, but this had less impact on outcomes for local people.

During the course of the discussions, the following actions were agreed for the Head of Corporate Strategy and Communications:

- The panel to receive a copy of the client team's report on street cleansing.
- The panel to receive information about the community survey.
- The panel to receive a copy of the presentation made at the meeting.

The panel expressed its thanks to the Head of Corporate Strategy and Communications for a very useful and informative presentation.

RESOLVED –

1. that the report be noted.
2. that the actions requested be undertaken.

## 5 **Performance report (Q4 2016/17)**

The panel received a report of the Head of Corporate Strategy and Communications. The report provided the results for the key performance indicators identified for Watford Borough Council's outsourced services for 2016/17.

The panel considered all the indicators in the report and asked questions of clarification and made comments.

Members expressed the view that a number of the targets in the report should be reconsidered. Some were below the performance achieved in previous years.

Discussing how the results could be compared with other authorities, it was noted that the other Hertfordshire authorities were not very similar to Watford. CIPFA had a list of 'nearest neighbour; authorities which was based on demographics. The panel discussed the impact of the local context on various indicators in the report and the differences with neighbouring authorities.

Councillors encountering estate agent boards in inappropriate places were advised to speak to the company involved or the planning enforcement team.

During the course of the discussions, the following actions were agreed for the Head of Corporate Strategy and Communications:

- To discuss the reasons for the targets set with the appropriate heads of service. The panel was particularly concerned about the following indicators:
  - 1 (time to process housing benefit claims)

- 2 (time to process change of circumstances) and why the performance had improved so significantly during the year.
- 17 (value of outstanding invoices < 12 months old compared to total raised in a rolling 12 month period)
- 18 (value of outstanding invoices >12 months old)

The explanation for these targets would be circulated once they were available.

- To find the definition for indicator 2, time to process change of circumstances.
- That the Head of Revenue and Benefits be invited to the meeting on 25 September 2017 when the performance report for Q1 would be discussed.
- To obtain comparator information for the residual waste per household indicator and bring this information to the next meeting.
- To circulate any available data about levels of recycling in different wards.
- To inform the panel whether there were plans to introduce smart bins and what the timescales for this were.
- To provide the panel with details of penalty clauses in the Veolia contract.
- To determine the cause of the drop in throughput at Central Leisure Centre.
- To review the terminology on indicators 17 and 18, value of outstanding invoices over 12 months.
- To find the definition of indicator 19 (payment classified as 'LA error')
- To circulate information about the industry standard in IT contracts for the target for 'first time fixes'.

RESOLVED –

1. that the report and members' conclusions be noted.
2. that the actions requested be undertaken.

## 6 **Work programme**

The Panel reviewed the draft work programme which had been drawn up in consultation with the Chair and the Vice Chair of the Panel.

It was noted that the work programme would be kept under review throughout the year and the Panel could amend it as they felt appropriate.

It was agreed that members could review the parking annual report and it could be added to the work programme if necessary.

Following a query, the Committee and Scrutiny Support Officer agreed to find out whether town centre car parks were being made available for local residents to pay to park overnight.

RESOLVED –

- that the work programme set out in the agenda be agreed.
- that the Parking Annual Report be circulated by email rather than being on the work programme, subject to review by the panel.
- that the actions agreed be undertaken.

Chair

The Meeting started at 7.00 pm  
and finished at 9.10 pm